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When Paul Came Home.

By LULU JOHNSON.

(Copyrighted, 1937, by J. G. Reed.)

Paul Westerly cast a curious glance

about the office as he took his seat at

the big flat topped desk. Eight years

before he had stood in front of that

same piece of furniture while he had

listened to Guy Masters' scathing de-

nunciation of his effrontery in aspiring

to the hand of his employer's daughter.

Dismissal had followed the ar-

raignment, and Paul had been told not

to set foot inside the place again.

Now he was to sit in Masters' old

seat and control the destinies of the

plant. The same narrowness which

had regarded the suit of his assistant

foreman for his daughter's hand as an

insult had kept Masters out of the

print trust until too late. He had lost

the plant, and it was Paul who had

come to take charge for the new own-

ers.

This was the first time he had been

in the office since his dismissal. There

was less change than he expected to

find. The carpet was a little rusty,

the desk lacked the high polish that

once had been the standard and the

gilding of the picture frames was a

trifle tarnished. The whole place, in

fact, bore mute testimony to those two

years before the obstinate old man

had given in to the new order of

things.

There were flowers on the desk to

make welcome the new manager. Paul

read some of the names on the cards

and smiled grimly. He could remem-

ber the time when he had been taxed

dimes and quarters for the flowers of

policy. Now he was the recipient of

the shop blackmail.

It was for him that the collection

had been taken up in the various de-

partments. He touched a bell, and a

boy came in.

"Set those flowers on the side table,"

he ordered. "Keep them fresh as long

as you can. Take these on this side

of the table first that I may get my desk

in order."

Paul moved slightly back that the

boy might first clear the writing space.

"THIS EXPLAINS MUCH," SHE SAID AT

LENGTH.

The lad lifted over to a side table the

elaborate set pieces, and as he moved

away one particularly large piece a

smaller bouquet was disclosed.

It was just a little cluster of pansies,

rich, velvety blossoms that reminded

him of the pansy beds at the master's

home. He caught up the flowers and

searched eagerly for a card. There

was none attached to the bunch, nor

did a search reveal a card pinned from

the stems.

Then with sudden memory he exam-

ined the leaves that encircled the

blossoms, and his heart gave a leap, for

on the shiny green surface of one was

traced a four leaf clover and the in-

itials "L. M." It was a little trick he

had employed in those days when he

had sent flowers to Lilith Masters.

These, then, were from her, and she

remembered him kindly, even though

he came to take her father's place.

He had not supposed that she was in

town. He had understood that she had

married and gone to England to live.

He had had no direct communication

with her after he had left the little

mill town to seek other employment.

A dozen times he had written her in

care of her old nurse, but no answer

had come, and at last he had given her

up.

He had supposed that she had for-

gotten him entirely, but the pansies

appeared to tell another story, and it

was with a warm glow at his heart

that he went about the business of

straightening things up.

As he moved from the office he could

almost see Lilith as she used to look

when she came down in the trap to

take her father home. It was here

that he had seen her one afternoon

when he had come to bring a message

from his foreman. He had loved her

then, though he was but sixteen and

she three years younger. Later on he

had come to know her through her in-

terest in the benefit society maintained

in the factory, and eventually he had

won her love.

Then had come his declaration to her

father, his dismissal and his search for

work elsewhere. He had rapidly risen

in his new employment, and the trust

decided to give him charge of the Mas-

ters mill when Guy Masters, weary of the struggle, sought the rest that lies beyond the grave.

The little floral offering brought this all back more strongly than ever. Perhaps he would see her. Perhaps she would explain why it was that she had not answered his passionate letters. He had thought then she had determined to put him out of her mind, but the flowers told another story. She had always loved pansies best of all the flowers.

He whistled her favorite air as he moved about the office settling things to his liking. He was still whistling when he brought up in front of the door of the big safe. It was filled with a mass of papers, most of which Paul knew could be of little value.

Mr. Masters had had an almost superstitious dread of destroying any paper. Rapidly he drew from the pigeon-holes the accumulation of years and threw them on his desk for examination. Far back in the safe he came across a package that caused his eyes to open wide. Neatly banded with tape were the letters which he had sent Lilith eight years ago.

He had sent them to Lilith's old nurse to be given to her. Only the outer envelope had been opened, and the inner covers were still sealed. Masters would bribe to gain possession of the letters, but apparently his sense of honor prevented his reading them.

Paul turned them over curiously. The cheap paper was yellowed and stained. At best they had been poor things, the best that he could afford at the time. He smiled as he drew toward him his own personal paper with its embossed heading upon the heavily laid surface. Many things had changed in those eight years. He wondered if Lilith had changed with the rest. She had been seventeen then. Now she must be twenty-five. If she had been married, as he had been told, she must begin to look matronly by now. Perhaps there were children—it seemed funny to think of children in connection with Lilith. She was still a child herself in his mind's eye.

If she had never received his letters he did not blame her for marrying. Doubtless she had thought that he had forgotten. Forgotten! As if he ever could forget!

So sunk was he in his reverie that he did not notice that some one had entered until a voice broke the stillness, and he sprang to his feet. For an instant it seemed as though the concentration of his thoughts had materialized a vision, for before him stood the girl who had been in his mind all day.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said, "but I came to ask for some of father's personal papers. I thought it would be best to wait until a representative of the purchasers came before asking for them."

"Is it really you?" he asked. "For a moment it seemed a vision, you look so like your old self. I thought marriage would change you."

"Don't tell me that you heard that absurd report of my marriage. Sir Henry was three years older than father, and he came over to investigate the mill. That was all. Was that why you did not write?"

Paul handed her the package of letters.

"I found them in the safe," he explained simply. "Evidently our trust in Mrs. Willis was not well founded."

Curiously she turned the packet over in her hands. The tears came into her eyes as she realized that her father had withheld the letters.

"This explains much," she said at length. "I thought you ceased to care."

"I have never stopped loving you," he said passionately, "not even when I read that you were married."

"Nor I," she admitted; "not even when I thought you had forgotten."

Silently they regarded each other as their hands met in a clasp more eloquent than words. Paul looked out through the glass screen at the busy town beyond. "This is indeed a home coming," he said at last, and Lilith smiled response.

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"He, as soon as he was sworn, turned to the justice and said: "Squire, I brought this suit, and yet the evidence, excepting my own, is all against me. Now, I don't accuse any one of lying, squire, but these witnesses are the most mistaken lot of fellows I ever saw. You know me, squire. Two years ago you sold me a horse for sound that was as blind as a bat. I made the deal and stuck to it, and this is the first time I have mentioned it. When you used to buy my grain, squire, you stood on the scales when the empty wagon was weighed, but I never said a word. Now, do you think I am the kind of a man to kick up a rumpus and sue a fellow unless he has done me a real wrong? Why, squire, if you'll recall that sheep speculation you and me—"

Unlucky. Young Wife—I am unlucky! Yesterday the beef was roasting beautifully in the oven, and while I ran to tell my husband about it it burned.—Meggon-dorfer Blatter.

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